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**(54) METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PROVIDING AN EFFICIENT  
CONTROL CHANNEL STRUCTURE IN A WIRELESS  
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM**

(57) Abstract:

According to one aspect of the invention, a method is provided in which a control channel used for transmitting control information is partitioned into a plurality of subchannels each of which is operated at a specific data rate. For each of one or more user terminals, one of the subchannels is selected based on one or more selection criteria for transmitting control information from an access point to the respective user terminal. Control information is transmitted from the access point to a user terminal on a particular subchannel selected for the respective user terminal. At the user terminal, one or more subchannels are decoded to obtain control information designated for the user terminal.

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